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The Store For SPIES

*Using electronic wizardry
to stop terrorists, snoopers*

By Diana West
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It was a little like something out of a James Bond movie — or maybe more like an old "Avengers" TV episode.

"CCS Counterspy Shop," answered a hearty male voice on the other end of the phone.

"I'd like to speak with Mr. Hawkins for a free consultation, please," said a young woman a little nervously, reading the name from a somewhat cryptic ad in the morning paper.

"Just a moment," the man said.

The ad was just another one of those small rectangular patches in an advertising crazy quilt, a newspaper page where contact lenses and diamond rings strain to shine outside of their newsprint boxes.

But this particular ad was different from the rest; it was actually provocative. Even the ad touting a sale on "panty waist nippers" (with an illustration) paled in comparison.

"Could Someone Be BUGGING You or TAPPING Your Phones?" the ad demanded. An oversize question mark standing on top of a drawing of a phone added a slightly preposterous but nonetheless exciting touch to the question. "Let CCS find out," it urged.

"Who could be bugging you?" the ad continued. "Partners, rivals, friends, relatives, associates, enemies, spouses, competitors, etc. CCS can help you find out for sure. For a free consultation, call Mr. Hawkins."

And there on the phone, finally, was Mr. Hawkins. "Yes, this is he. What can I do for you?" She didn't precisely know. "Well, what exactly do you do?" "We specialize in all kinds of counterespionage and anti-

terrorism equipment," he explained. "And we can detect bugs and wiretaps on your phones. But," he added confidently, "I don't like to get into it too much over the phone. You never know what the disposition of the telephone is."

Counterespionage and anti-terrorism equipment? Wiretaps? Is this for real? And if Mr. Hawkins doesn't know what the "disposition" of the telephone is, who does?

Situated on the lower level of an overwhelmingly unexotic office building cum mall on K Street, the CCS Counterspy Shop stands cheek by jowl with such eclectic establishments as a religious bookstore whose wares spill out into the hall ("Read The Book as advertised on TV," urges one display), and an ordinary camera store.

The shop itself, to the casual passer-by, is a small and even unimpressive spot, its plain pine board shelves stocked unimaginatively with cardboard boxes containing only slightly unusual wares, such as super high-tech phones and radios. Its glass counters are manned by a slim, older woman with smooth white hair.

"Can I help you?" she asked brightly, leaning comfortably over the counter above an intriguing little item called "The Security Blanket," a flashlight with a beam of 5 million lumens that "causes total disorientation and leaves the intended victim time to escape."

"I have an appointment with Mr. Hawkins."

"He's not here," said the woman. "But perhaps someone else can help you."

"That's funny," the customer said. "I just spoke to him and arranged to meet him here."

"He's not in right now, can I help you?" said a mustachioed young man who had just emerged through a

door leading to another room at the rear of the store. "Right this way."

Where was Mr. Hawkins? the prospective customer wondered as she followed the man back through the door, walking past a table arranged with briefcases open to reveal what turned out to be letter-bomb detectors. Mr. Hawkins had set up the appointment not half an hour ago.

"There is no Mr. Hawkins," admitted Bill Roth with a smile as he eased himself into a chair behind his paper-strewn desk in one corner of the room. "You talked to me on the phone earlier," he said. "We just use

'Mr. Hawkins' to tell us who's calling us from the ad."

And as for the retail shop out front, "that's basically a screening area we use to determine if someone needs to meet with us in private back here," continued Mr. Roth. "And Sydel is really good at that," he added with a grin, referring to the lady minding the store. "Now what kind of problem do you have?"

CCS Communications Inc., a New York-based company with offices all over the world, from Paris to Beverly Hills, specializes in solving the unusual array of "security problems" of an unusual array of people — from potentates with revolutionary populaces, to embassies with eavesdroppers, to estranged spouses with overzealous ex-spouses. In their Manhattan offices, they design most of the equipment that they sell.

The company was founded 10 years ago by Ben Jamil, a man who got his start in 1955 by rewiring antique French telephones. Soon, his company, Telephones Unlimited, was selling fancy phones to the ritziest stores, ringing up sales of \$7 million annually. And that's when AT&T sued. In 1969, after a long court battle, Mr. Jamil won.

Mr. Jamil then sold that company and turned his attention from designing telephones to protecting them against eavesdroppers. "It's so simple to tap a phone," explained Mr. Roth. "You can mail away for a cheap bug from the back of one of those electronics magazines. And they're so easy to put on," he added.

CCS, however, does not sell bugs or wiretaps. Mr. Roth asserted, "We sell defensive equipment only" — \$20 million worth of defensive equipment each year, to be precise.

While CCS' defensive equipment couldn't save the Peacock Throne for the shah of Iran, the company did design for him a "VIP Security

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